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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (11/25): "A NATIONAL UNITY
GOVERNMENT - A SOLUTION TO DIVISION?"

Main Stories:

The dailies lead with coverage of the "inauguration" speech by Palestinian Authority President Abbas, the second Palestinian to be symbolically voted "President of State" on November 23. Abbas pledged to establish a free and independent Palestinian state and work towards ending the Gaza "siege" in his November 24 remarks. He criticized Israel for expanding settlements and seeking to "Judaize" Jerusalem. He also criticized Hamas' de facto rule of Gaza. In related reporting Al Ayyam's front page runs a response to Abbas' recent call for early elections, should internal Palestinian division persist. Hamas leader Zahhar insisted on November 24 that Abbas cannot call early parliamentary elections without the approval of the Hamas-controlled parliament, adding, "Abbas is facing a serious political crisis and is trying to find a way out."

Al Hayat Al Jadida and Al Ayyam publish front page reports and photos from Gaza where Israel allowed 30 truckloads of food and 230,000 liters of diesel fuel into the Gaza Strip on November 24. The photos show flour sacks arriving into Gaza, and workers pumping diesel fuel into the electricity plant. Al Ayyam also frontpages news that Egypt has increased its military forces along the Gaza borders, in response to a crowd of Gazans gathered at the crossings, demanding entry to Egypt. In other news, Al Ayyam's inside page reports that Hamas prevented Muslim pilgrims from leaving the Gaza Strip for Saudi Arabia, but has charged them approximately \$1,000 anyway, despite Hamas' failure to secure visas to Saudi Arabia. Finally, Al Quds' front page runs an AP article about Gaza banks running out of cash and reports on an inside page that foreign journalists have brought their protest on the ban denying entry by journalists into Gaza, before the Israeli High Court.

Al Quds' front page cites Israel's Yedeot Aharanot daily when

revealing that an official Israeli document legalized the use of "violence" when interrogating Palestinian detainees. The three papers also publish a front page story about a video released by Israel's BTselem human rights organization, showing an Israeli policeman ramming a Palestinian woman and man from Jerusalem's Silwan neighborhood with his metal helmet, as the Israeli military demolished a Palestinian house in the background.

Al Ayyam's front page reports that Israeli military demolished the Palestinian home of an 11-member family in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Al-Azariyya on November 24, according to witnesses and international observers. The Ma'an network notes that the building was the sixth Palestinian house to be demolished in East Jerusalem in the last three weeks. Al Quds inside page reports that Jewish Israeli religious students demolished a wall and destroyed tombs in a Muslim cemetery belonging to the Palestinian Dajani family in Jerusalem.

Al Quds' front page runs an AFP story reporting that President Bush and Israel's Premier Ehud Olmert confirmed, at their farewell White House meeting on November 24, that peace efforts will continue after they leave office, and that Israel would benefit from the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Al Ayyam's front page cites Israel's Haaretz newspaper reporting that an Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) report shows that the cost of reoccupying Gaza would be \$125 million per month. The paper noted that the IDF command does not intend to launch a mass offensive on Gaza, but rather is convinced that Hamas will remain committed to the truce. In another front page article, the paper cites Reuters when quoting Israel's Interior Minister Shitrit calling for the adoption of the Arab peace initiative as the, "best channel for

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realizing peace in the Middle East."

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Hani Masri opines in Al Ayyam under the title, "The President's [Abbas'] call for elections: A tactic or recognition of division?"(11/25): "If the necessary agreement [between Fatah and Hamas] isn't possible, then the... alternative to continuing and deepening division is... temporarily putting up with division by establishing a national consensus government. [That government] would halt current deterioration and work towards creating an atmosphere conducive to... national unity and ... holding presidential and legislative elections in mid 2009;[the timing] falls in the middle of the supposed end of the President's term [Abbas] in December 2008 and the agreed-upon end of the Legislative Council's term on December 5 2010... There is no alternative to reforming and improving the PLO, whether Hamas joins the organization or not."

2) Rajab Abu Saraya writes in Al Ayyam under the title "Last minute choices" (11/25): "[Israel] continues to blackmail the Gaza authorities with the 'food for security' scheme... Israel [seems to be] succeeding for the first time in negotiating with 'local' Palestinians on specific issues instead of bundling all final agreement issues into one package. The last minute choices are difficult and rather dangerous... the best solution remains crafting an internal unity miracle..."

Walles